

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A framework for providing information technology design solutions, the framework comprising:

a first knowledge base of characteristics that describe products and functions, wherein a combination of products performs a set of functions;

a second knowledge base that manages relationship information regarding the interactions of products and defines all valid product combinations, wherein each valid product combination forms a network unit;

a third knowledge base that manages information regarding the interconnectability of network units, wherein a valid combination of network units comprises a configuration; and

a fourth knowledge base that includes clouds, wherein each cloud describes a set of all possible configurations that can fulfill a predetermined function that the cloud represents.

2. (Original) The framework of claim 1, wherein the first knowledge base of characteristics includes generic characteristics that describe a set of products or functions having similar characteristics.

3. (Original) The framework of claim 1, wherein the second knowledge base includes generic network units that describe a set of network units that perform similar functions.

4. (Cancelled).

5. (Original) The framework of claim 1, wherein each configuration comprises at least one network unit partnership.
6. (Original) The framework of claim 1, further comprising a key word search engine that allows characteristics to be searched.
7. (Original) The framework of claim 1, further comprising a solution knowledge base, wherein each solution includes a set of customer specific configurations.
8. (Original) The framework of claim 7, further comprising a box knowledge base that includes a product listing for each solution in the solution knowledge base.
9. (Original) The framework of claim 8, further comprising a network knowledge base that includes a set of boxes.
10. (Original) The framework of claim 9, further comprising a customer knowledge base that includes customer specific information.
11. (Previously Presented) The framework of claim 4, further comprising a solution advisor tool for designing a solution made up of a set of network units, the solution advisor tool comprising:
 - a system for specifying the solution using a selected first cloud;
 - a system for replacing the selected first cloud with a set of clouds;

- a system for replacing the selected cloud with at least one configuration;
- a system for replacing a selected configuration with at least one network unit; and
- a system for replacing a generic network unit with a specific network unit.

12. (Original) The framework of claim 11, wherein the solution advisor tool further comprises a system for replacing a generic characteristic with a specific characteristic.

13. (Currently Amended) A solution advisor tool for designing an information technology (IT) solution, comprising:

a knowledge management system for generating and storing information in a hierarchical format, wherein the knowledge management system includes:

a first knowledge base of characteristics;

a second knowledge base that manages relationship information regarding the interactions of characteristics and defines all valid characteristic combinations, wherein each valid characteristic combination forms a network unit;

a third knowledge base that manages information regarding the interconnectability of network units, wherein a valid combination of network units comprises a configuration; and

a fourth knowledge base that manages information regarding sets of all possible configurations that can fulfill a predetermined function, wherein each set comprises a cloud; and

a design interface system for generating the IT solution, comprising:

- a system for specifying the solution using a first cloud;
- a system for replacing the first cloud with a set of second clouds;
- a system for replacing a selected cloud with at least one configuration;
- a system for replacing a selected configuration with at least one network unit; and
- a system for replacing a generic network unit with a specific network unit.

14. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 13, further comprising a fifth database of keywords.

15. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 13, further comprising a sixth knowledge base of valid network unit partners.

16. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 13, wherein the characteristics comprise products and functions.

17. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 13, characteristics comprise generic products and specific products.

18. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 17, wherein the design interface further includes a system for replacing generic products with specific products.

19. (Currently Amended) A program product stored on a recordable medium, which when executed provides a system for generating an information technology solution, comprising:

a system for specifying a generic solution using a cloud selected from a plurality of clouds, wherein each cloud provides a set of all possible configurations that can fulfill a predetermined function that the cloud represents, and wherein each configuration includes a valid set of network units, and wherein each network unit comprises a set of characteristics;

a system for replacing the cloud with at least one second cloud, wherein the at least one second cloud includes a more specific set of configuration details;

a system for replacing a selected cloud with at least one configuration;

a system for replacing a selected configuration with at least one network unit; and

a system for replacing a generic network unit with a specific network unit.

20. (Original) The program product of claim 19, further comprising a system for replacing generic characteristics with specific characteristics.

21. (Original) The program product of claim 19, wherein the set of characteristics include products and functions.

22. (Original) The program product of claim 19, wherein the program product further includes a system for storing and managing information regarding the clouds, configurations, network units and characteristics.

23. (Currently Amended) A solution advisor tool for generating an information technology solution, comprising:

a cloud knowledge base that includes a plurality of clouds, wherein each cloud provides a set of all possible configurations that can fulfill a predetermined function that the cloud represents, and wherein each configuration includes a valid set of network units, and wherein each network unit comprises a set of compatible characteristics; and

a system for designing a solution using clouds selected from the cloud knowledge base.

24. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 23, wherein the cloud knowledge base includes business need clouds that contain application cloud network units and application gateway network units.

25. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 23, wherein the cloud knowledge base includes application clouds that contain transport cloud network units and transport gateway network units.

26. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 23, wherein the cloud knowledge base includes transport clouds that contain bridged cloud network units, subnetwork cloud network units and subnetwork gateway network units.

27. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 23, wherein the cloud knowledge base includes bridged clouds that contain subnetwork cloud network units and subnetwork gateway network units.

28. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 23, wherein the cloud knowledge base includes subnetwork clouds which contain gateway network units.

29. (Original) The solution advisor tool of claim 23, further comprising:

a system for combining characteristics stored in a characteristic knowledge base to generate the set of network units, wherein the set of network units are stored in a network unit knowledge base; and

a system for combining network units stored in the network unit knowledge base to generate the possible configurations, wherein the possible configurations are stored in a configuration knowledge base.